

TWO LEGEND TYPES: AN INTRODUCTION

Editorial Note:

It has been noted that every legend has its own pattern of dissemination and timing, and that some even become dormant after a period of rapid and intense transmission only to resurface in later times. This almost cyclical tendency can be seen immediately in several currently popular legends. In the investigation of such cultural phenomena it is important to consider corresponding evidence from older sources which can often reflect the social relationships of contemporary narratives. Among the numerous legend types that appear today in forms ranging from the informal conversational level of rumor to presentation in the mass media we offer here two particularly wide-spread in the industrial world. One concerns UFO sightings and the other is about the discovery of inappropriate animal parts in prepared foods. Variants of both types had been collected by folklore students during the 1950's and 1960's and the collections are now housed in the Indiana University Folklore Archives. The following articles are initial studies of the twenty- and thirty-year old narratives with attention directed to the legend cores and structures.

It is to be emphasized that neither Domowitz's or Lowe's analyses are based on legends in present circulation. Little extensive research has been published by folklorists on current versions of either type, although several projects are in progress.

A few recent articles and notes by folklorists and scholars in related fields are available on the subject of UFOs and include: Michael Carroll, "Of Atlantis and Ancient Astronauts: A Structural Study of Two Modern Myths," *Journal of Popular Culture* 11:3 (1977): 541-50; Linda Dégh, "UFO's and How Folklorists Should Look at Them," *Fabula* 18 (1977): 242-48; David Hufford, "Humanoids and Anomalous Lights: Taxonomic and Epistemological Problems," *Fabula* 18 (1977): 234-41; J.A. Keel, "The Flying Saucer Sub-Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 8:4 (1975): 871-96; Philip J. Klass, "The Conversion of J. Allen Hynek," *The Skeptical Inquirer, The Zetetic* 3:3 Spring (1979): 49-57; Philip J. Klass, "NASA, the

White House and UFOs," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, *The Zetetic* 2:2 Spring-Summer (1978): 72-81; James Oberg, "Astronaut 'UFO' Sightings," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, *The Zetetic* 3:1 Fall (1978): 39-46; and R. Westrum, "A Note on Monsters," *Journal of Popular Culture* 8:4 (1975): 263. An important and scholarly book is Donald H. Munzel and Ernest M. Taves, *The Definitive Explanation of the UFO Phenomenon* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977). Other useful publications are non-folkloric documentations of the UFO phenomenon. Hayden Hughes and Brad Steiger's *UFO: Missionaries Extraordinary* (New York: Pocketbooks, 1976) consists of a series of interviews with Bo and Peep, the erstwhile leaders of a nationally publicized UFO cult. A more analytical presentation of UFO data is made by Frank B. Salisbury in *Utah UFO Display* (Old Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair Company, 1974) in the form of verbatim interviews from the Uintah Basin, a review of UFO literature, an annotated bibliography, and charts of regional sightings. Another compendium of UFO accounts by witnesses is Renato Vesco's *Intercept, UFO* (New York: Zebra Books, 1974).

Intensive studies of the "foreign matter in food" phenomenon have not yet been made by folklorists, probably because of the very immediacy of the rumors and legends. A few short scholarly notes have been published, but are more in the spirit of documentation than analysis: see E.C. Cawte, in "Notes and Queries," *Lore and Language* 1:9 (1973): 2; B.S. Donaghey, "The Chinese Restaurant Story Again: An Antipodean Version," *Lore and Language* 2:8 (1978): 24-26; William Kirwin, in "Notes and Queries," *Lore and Language* 1:8 (1973): 28; Graham Shorrocks, "Chinese Restaurant Stories: International Folklore," *Lore and Language* 2:3 (1975): 30; and Paul and Georgina Smith, in "Notes and Queries," *Lore and Language* 1:7 (1972): 25. At the Seventh Congress of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research in Edinburgh, August 1979, in his paper, "Modern Migratory Legends in Oral Tradition and Daily Papers," Bengt Af Klintberg briefly discussed an example of a European migratory legend revolving around a rat bone found in foreign restaurant food. The predominant interest in this legend, however, can be observed in magazine and newspaper reports over the last few years. Instances of mass media presentation are "A Wormburger Scare," *Newsweek*, November 27 1979: 90, and "McDonald's Beef with the Rumormongers," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 8 1979; B24.

Virginia A.P. Lowe

A BRIEF LOOK AT SOME UFO LEGENDS

In "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society," Linda Dégh has pointed out the potential for folkloric investigation into UFO stories.¹ The Folklore Archives at Indiana University contains at least twenty-one narratives revolving around an encounter with some sort of Unidentified Flying Object. Although these narratives are seemingly individual reports of separate experiences, there is a remarkable similarity in the accounts of the incidents. A close look at the stories suggests that they form part of a legend complex.

The unity of a legend complex stems from the common possession by the narratives of certain recurrent elements formed from the legend core. The essentials of the legend can be determined through a content analysis in which the story components are singled out and abstracted from each narrative. The results of such a procedure for the twenty-one UFO stories can be found in the chart at the end of this paper. What follows is a discussion of the significant relationships revealed.

First it should be noted that stories #1 and #2 (as numbered in the sequence of narratives included after the body of discussion) do not truly fit the format of the other nineteen. They are not "sightings" as such although #1 involves actual contact with an alien vessel and #2 refers to an extraterrestrial manifestation. The number and type of essential features does not match the pattern of the majority of stories. These stories will therefore not be of primary concern.

Each narrative begins with a string of orientation features; location, time of the event, and the identity of the observer. All variants contain some identity marker. Eleven are stated to be personal experiences (therefore qualifying in at least a formal manner as memorates). In two stories full names of the observers are given, and of the remaining six stories, four of the observers are relatives of either the narrator or the narrator's acquaintance. The experiencer in one (#10) is a customer of the narrator's friend, a barkeep, so the aspect of personal connection is maintained. Only one narrative contains the general term "a guy," but this vagueness is in part balanced by giving a highly specific location.

In slightly over half the accounts the general location is assumed to be that of the narrator's town. Two of these, however, give specific street

names in addition to known landmarks such as a Dairy Queen and a school, and two others indicate the occurrence as talking place along a country road or as being viewed from a backyard. The other nine locatives place the event in a certain town, between two cities, in another state or even another country.

The third orientation feature, time of the event, is detailed in thirteen of the narratives. The month and/or year is indicated in nine instances. The former falls in either Spring or Summer, and the latter ranges from 1965 to 1967 except in #17 where the UFO appeared to the narrator's aunt in 1940. The hour of the sighting is included in three of these nine. For the other six accounts marking time, either day or night is mentioned. The six left unmarked allowed a day/night distinction to be made from the type of activity in which the observer is engaged.

The various activities cited fall rather neatly into five categories. Three of the sighting parties are outside, two in recreational situations. Cars are connected with nine; seven people are driving and two are "parking" with their sweethearts. Eight of the other accounts set activity within the home in the evening or late night hours, when people are relaxing in front of the T. V., cleaning up, or preparing for (or engaging in) sleep. In the two narratives that have two separate observations, one episode in each involves driving.

The stage is now set for the disruptive occurrence. Ordinary people are going about their normal mundane existence in quite unexotic places. The familiarity of the world around them is highlighted by all but one of the narrators; even the television shows are well-known (e.g. "The Virginian" and "The Man from UNCLE"). Whatever the reality of the UFO might be the tales take on the appearance of actual incidents. The adventures are firmly situated in time and space and the participants are usually known. All these elements perform not only their normal orientation function but also a function of verification.

It is within this setting that the world is made strange.² The inverting of normal order seems to be made more comfortable by group witnessing. Eleven of the principle witnesses were already in company at the time and two more went to fetch additional observers. Of those people who were alone in the confrontation with the extra-normal, only one later talked to other people who also had seen it; two individuals would not mention it because they feared being thought crazy, and the other two had unusual experiences which would in some way verify the event. (#17 and #19)

The object which intruded itself into the normal world is described in all but two variants. In #19 the woman heard noises that frightened her to such an extent that she would not look at the source until the sounds had died away, then all she saw were lights vanishing over the trees. The other case of

non-description is especially interesting in that by briefly referring to the "thing" and its actions, the legend teller has assumed that the listener will also recognize that "It was a UFO alright" (#13). His omission of a physical description of the central phenomenon of his story indicates his own expectations of a common understanding and reflects the fragmentary nature of the legend.³ This assumption on his part is partially proven by the descriptions provided by the other tellers. The object's appearance falls into two broad categories; a ball of light and a large, round thing. The manifestation as light, when assigned a color, is either orange or red (fiery). Of the more tangible UFOs, eight had lights blinking or revolving; four of these had multicolor lights of red, green, blue or white.

In addition to a certain brilliance that would call attention to itself, the UFO would occasionally make noise. The watchers in #9 even listened expectantly with, however, no cooperation from their UFO which remained silent. Loud, weird sounds are mentioned in five instances; twice it was this din which alerted the witness to the object's presence.

Whatever the extent to which it is described, the location of the UFO is always mentioned, often in conjunction with its behavior and its effect on the observers or its surroundings. Open fields (7 stories) and cars or roads (6 stories) seemed to be particularly attractive to alien navigators. In three of the latter instances an extraterrestrial craft actually followed the vehicle. One case of attraction to an automobile had the light-form in question generating so much heat that the observer sweat through his shirt and stained his bucket seat. The light-form version, incidently, seems to exert a special power over both the inanimate and animate: one caused a car to temporarily cease functioning and another virtually paralyzed an entire family in an open area.

Special needs of the UFOs apparently dictated certain sites of appearance. Two came close to power lines, presumably because they needed recharging (#12). And some aliens must have suffered hunger pangs as well as electrical outages or simple curiosity; one farmer accused the UFO of taking two full grown cows from his field (#10).

Whether the site of arrival was over a field, above a road or car, or, more generally, in the open sky, the movement around the chosen spot was fairly consistent. The type of motion is noted in thirteen narratives and of those, ten describe it as hovering. There are other ways to describe the indicated action, such as #20's "almost motionless," so it can be proposed that the narrators are drawing from a common language peculiar to the phenomenon. It is when the object was in open space that it is said to act in other manners such as a fitful alternation of speed up and slowing down, or a continuous movement.

When hovering ceases, the speed of the object in disappearing was fantastic. Nine stories contain reference to the remarkable rapidity of exit, in #21 the UFO was clocked at 120 mph.

All of the hovering, darting, lighting, and heating, etc. took place within a limited span of time. The length of appearance varied from a few minutes to two hours and ten minutes. In numbers 4 and 5, the frequency of recurring appearances extended from a week to ten days.

Proof of the story's veracity was provided, as seen above, by physical evidence such as the scorching of bushes, a stained car seat, and missing farm animals. Multiple witnessing of the event also lent credibility, a variation on the idea of safety in numbers. Several narrators, however, felt the need to refer to authorities with more weight in the social world. This act is especially understandable from the farmer who had no other immediate verification and so called the police, even though he later obtained both tangible evidence (his missing cows) and verbal corroboration from independent witnesses. Appeal to authority was not limited to the solitary observer; the groups of numbers 6 and 15 made contact with the Air Force and the newspapers, two organizations which would be able to reinforce the phenomenon's validity.

Apart from attempts at verification of the sights before their eyes, the observers played a very passive role in the event. Most demonstrated curiosity and watched the gyrations of the UFO until its disappearance: only four individuals expressed a definite feeling of fear. The unusual nature of what had been seen was made explicit in five narratives along with three admissions of a positive belief in UFOs. Only two people felt that the vision was so extraordinary as to be wary of admitting its occurrence. It is significant to note that these last were alone at the time and had no external means of substantiating the event.

The major components of the nineteen narratives form a distinct pattern. The orientation segments establish time and/or location, the nature of the people involved, and the activity in which those people are engaged. Each of these elements is directed to the depiction of a calm, sane and sensible world in which ordinary people carry on their lives.

The complication, or action, of the story inserts an element of the unexpected and (at first sight) unexplainable. An object of highly unusual and notable appearance materializes in a spot where no such thing should be, and proceeds to comport itself in a bizarre fashion that, in some cases, even has an effect on its surroundings. Nothing can be done by the observers except to hide or watch until it vanishes of its own accord. The human actors in this little drama have no part in its resolution. They must be content with some sort of evaluative commentary, whether an expression of the fear felt, a

statement of wonder or belief, or a simple affirmation of the phenomenon's reality.

It is the relationship of the orientation components to the complication components that highlights the common knowledge of the UFO legend tellers. They share a frame of reference⁴ which enables them to appropriately set up similar narrative structures combining similar contents. In the case of UFO stories, the shared knowledge is, as Linda Dégh has stated, "not identical with the 'knowledge of objective truth' and the acceptance of 'scientific hypotheses.'" ⁵ The abnormal event is based more on science fiction than on science facts. This science fiction is not that found among writers or sci-fi novels but that of an unconscious and general conception of what the extranormal, extraterrestrial "should" be like. An intrusion into the familiar world should be spectacular and observable, the more color and light the better. The disruption of the normal routine should leave physical evidence and should make a lasting impression on its witnesses. Scientific plausibility becomes irrelevant.

A shared understanding of the proper actions and appearances of a UFO (as in contrast to more technological expectations) enables the narrators to make their brief statements without long elaborations of what is meant. They do not have to say "This is a UFO," or "There are such things as space ships. They look like such and such." Fragments of description suffice.

The interest manifested by the teller (and presumably the audience) lies in the "fact" of the legend. The abstracted major components and their relations make plain what that fact is. Participation in technological progress and contact with the exciting potential of the future can be made available to those of us who are not scientists or technicians. The new frontiers of space and space travel are open even to the folk of rural Indiana. Whether it is sought or not, the experience of confrontation is the privilege of every person. The usual is imbued with the unusual; therefore the unusual becomes more familiar. Nothing can be done to forestall it or alter it; it happens.

The UFO legend in its fragmentary forms and its assertion that something extraterrestrial not only exists but visits earth is a good example of the dialectic of belief formulated by Dégh. Its telling rests on the departure of the content from standard social reality. It violates some people's norms for perception of the environment all the while it provides a variety of proof for its own veracity. "No matter what the legend contains, it questions one and the same thing by asserting and provoking contradiction not in favor of certainty but of uncertainty." ⁶ It is left to the listener to provide a final interpretation and to draw upon his own socio-cultural information to take on the role of skeptic or believer.

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UFO Legend Variants

1. "I heard about an X-15 that had only 15 minutes of fuel and went out on a test run. Well, in a few minutes the plane disappeared off the radar screen and was thought to have crashed. So rescue planes were sent out to find the airplane but could not locate a thing. Then after three hours the plane came down. When questioned about where he had been, the pilot explained that he had been pulled into a mother ship, a base ship for smaller flying saucers, by accident, then after talking with the aliens they let him go and he came back to his air base. Now the Air Force couldn't just laugh off a flying saucer report this time because he was gone three hours on only 15 minutes of fuel."

Told by: Dave Medsker, age 15, Kokomo, In.

Collected by: William Masters

FA/1687

2. "My brother told me about a flying saucer that exploded over Nevada. One day in 1962 there was an explosion, as brilliant as an atomic blast, over Nevada. Radar tracked it into Nevada and it was going too fast to be a jet. And the Air Force said that they just didn't know what it was."

Told by: Dave Medsker, age 15, Kokomo, In.

Collected by: William Masters

FA/1688

3. "One day last August I was outside about six in the evening and I saw three orange disks flying in a V-pattern. I watched them for a while and they hovered then darted to one side and then hovered again. I went and got my folks and we watched them for a few more minutes then they darted out of sight."

Told by: Dave Medsker, age 15, Kokomo, In.

Collected by: William Masters

FA/1690

4. In the summer of 1965, there was quite a disturbance created by several unidentifiable objects by our houses in this field. We first saw or noticed these "things" late one night. It was about three or four o'clock in the morning and my mother was awakened by these weird sounds and noises. She got up to see

what it was and that's when she saw these things. They were quite large and they seemed irredecent (sic) or milky in texture. But the main thing that caught the eye were the red and green lights on them. They hovered for a while and then left, but not without blasting the eardrums thoroughly. I first saw them a little later and one night a friend of mine and I drove to Tipton and this thing followed us all the way. It looked like it had the ability to hover for an extended amount of time or it would speed up at a very rapid rate of speed. Sometimes it disappeared but that could have been because of the clouds. This lasted for about a week and then they weren't seen any longer.

Told by: Kathy Goldsmith, Kokomo, In.
 Collected by Carol Rhinebarger, 1965.
 FA/1404

5. The summer before last (1965) my daughter and I were looking out the back door here and we noticed a silver object coming up very slowly over the hill. It was just sundown so we couldn't really see how large it was. It had red, blue, green and white lights which kept blinking on and off, and it hovered directly between the huge tree and the power lines. It would hover there for about forty minutes each time we saw it. We both saw this object go through the same act ten nights in a row.

Told by: Herman Sprinkle, Kokomo, In.
 Collected by Richard G. Snyder, 1967
 FA/1142

6. The sister-in-law of this teacher was coming home from some type of social gathering to her home in Rossburg, Ohio with two of her brothers and her cousin. As they pulled into the drive to her house, there in the field about thirty to forty feet away from the car, was a metallic object about the size of an automobile hovering over the ground. The object made a noise similar to that of a vacuum cleaner and had red, white, and green blinking lights. The party of people viewed the object from their car at this distance for a period of about ten minutes. They then drove up to her house and viewed the object for a full two hours with the aid of binoculars. It was suggested by one of the brothers that they aim the headlights of their auto at the object. When they did, the lights of the object blinked back.

The object left at the instant her husband came. Each of these four people called Wright Patterson Airbase in Ohio and talked a half hour a piece to one of the officers.

About a week later, this sister-in-law attended a wedding in Kokomo. After the wedding, the groom's father came up to her and said, "Have they contacted you yet?" She of course became very upset over this. Throughout the next few weeks she witnessed many more such objects. Then one night when she was

alone and watching "The Virginian," the screen went blank and her name flashed across the screen.

Told by: Richard Snyder as heard from his father. Kokomo, In.

Collected by: Richard G. Snyder, 1967.

FA/1141

7. Well, last summer, Libby (her daughter, aged 15) and I were cleaning up the house when suddenly we heard terrible screaming. When I looked out the window here a woman was standing outside by her car pointing to the South to the sky. Libby and I both ran outside and looked to where she was pointing, directly above the road, and saw five lights just zipping back and forth across the sky. They might stop for just a while when they would zip around some more. (I asked her if they had any volume or depth to them) No, you could see through them. . . they were kinda misty. They were circular shaped and all five of them seemed to be identical. They went away after about fifteen minutes, but I've never seen anything like it in my life.

Told by: Mrs. Ada Taylor, Kokomo, In.

Collected by: Richard G. Snyder, 1967.

FA/1140

8. My parents and I were in the house watching "The Man from Uncle," and having a few drinks and a friend of mine from Purdue came over and told me to rush outside. While we were outside viewing a large red object, it slowly grew dimmer until it disappeared. They reported it had been following them for some time and grew dimmer when they watched it closely.

Told by: James Smith, Gary, In.

Collected by: AnnaLee Kambol, 1966.

FA/146

9. One night my boyfriend and I were out parking. I looked out the window and saw this huge orange ball coming right toward the car. I was scared and wanted to leave but my boyfriend said to wait a minute. We just stayed in the car and watch the ball hovering over a field. It would go up a little and then come down again. We rolled down the window but we couldn't hear anything unusual. Finally it went up very quickly and disappeared into the clouds. I didn't believe in flying saucers before then but I do now.

Told by: a "white female" (relative) aged 23, Frankfort, In.

Collected by: Gordon Zeider, 1969.

FA/1826 (69/51)

10. There was this man that came in the bar the other night and told me about a flying saucer on his farm up by Argos, Indiana. He said the saucer was round with white and red lights that blinked on and off. The saucer landed in his field and he wanted to get close to it but he was too afraid. he went to the phone to call the police and when he went back to look at it he could not see it. Off in the distance he told me he could see the lights going across the sky. The next day he went out to water his cows. There were two full grown cows missing from his herd. He also told my grandfather that he talked to other people around the area that saw the lights also.

Told by: Ike Lowe, age 65, Rochester, In.
Collected by William Herrel, 1969.
FA/1808 (69/67).

11. Last year I was driving down S. Washington, in front of Dairy Queen, and I looked up and there was a flying saucer, above the Dairy Queen itself. At least it looked like a flying saucer—it was sort of round and flat and it had windows around the bottom and a couple of lights here and there. I slowed way down, so I could get a better look. It was sort of hovering in one spot and then all of a sudden it took off real fast.

I never did tell anyone about it because I thought that they would think I was crazy. . .

Told by: Jerry Brown, age 20, Germany (in letter to Kokomo).
Collected by Pamela Coyner, 1968.
FA/2080 (68/74).

12. There was a guy going east on Boulevard, past the school, and he saw this big light object in the sky. He thought it was following him, so he stopped. The object wasn't following him after all, but it either touched or hovered very close to the power line there. The guy got out of his car to see it better. It was sort of round and it was pretty good size. Some of the lights around the bottom seemed to be windows. It stayed in that position for a few minutes, then it moved away from the lines. Then all of a sudden, it shot upward at breakneck speed and was soon out of sight. He didn't tell anyone about it at the time because they would have thought he was a nut. He thinks that it needed some electrical power for some of its parts and it was getting it from the power lines.

Told by: Robert Coyner, age 43, Kokomo, In.
Collected by: Pamela Coyner, 1967.
FA/2079 (68/74).

13. This was back in April (1967) about a month after I got to California. I was sitting on my bed looking out over the valley at night. I usually sat on my bed,

smoked a cigarette and looked at the beautiful valley before I went to bed each night. I don't know the exact date, I was sitting there smoking a cigarette and I saw this thing. It came from over the mountain and just hovered there. I suppose it was about a half a mile up. I got up and woke everybody else up and we went outside. It only stayed about five minutes after we got out there, but we could see the revolving lights and everything. It was a UFO alright.

Told by: Stanley Moore, age 20, Frankfort, In.

Collected by: Ray McMains, 1969.

FA/legend file

14. Byron Miller and his girl were parked on a country road. Suddenly a bright, unbelievably bright, light appeared over his car. The light was so bright that when he looked up at it all he could see was light. Tremendous amounts of heat radiated from the light; it was so hot that Byron sweated through his navy blue shirt and stained his white bucket seat. The light was hovering over Byron's car for about ten minutes, then it disappeared as mysteriously as it appeared. Byron estimated that it lit a circle around his car of about forty feet in diameter.

Told by Geof Burns, age 20, Kokomo, In.

Collected by: Ray McMains, 1968.

FA/legend file

15. During the summer of 1966, we were standing in our backyard having a steak fry. All of a sudden we noticed something up in the sky that looked like a ball of fire. Everyone's attention soon centered on the object and we must have watched it for twenty or thirty minutes. It was very high up and at first was just moving across the sky like a comet or meteorite. Then it started speeding up, and then slowing down. It kept, more or less, a straight line, and then all of a sudden it disappeared. We didn't really think that much about it until later that evening we heard UFO reports on it from Chicago and Indianapolis over the radio. We telephoned our information into the *Frankfort Morning Times* newspaper and the next day there were reports in the Lafayette and Indianapolis newspaper about the UFO we saw.

Told by: Charles Snyder, age 52, Frankfort, In.

Collected by: Ray McMain, 1969.

FA/legend file

16. This is a story about the Dean family of Frankfort, Indiana. One night they were going fishing on Sugar Creek by Scotland Church. To get to the creek you must go through the weeds about an eighth of a mile. To get through the weeds

without losing anyone, the five Deans, Wanda, Mark, Jody, Pat, and Joe, were all holding hands because it was very dark; and all Joe, the father, had for a light was a flashlight. They finally reached the creek, and started fishing. Pat, the mother, said that they had been there a couple of hours when suddenly everything around them started to light up. Then they realized that an object overhead was giving off the light. The light stayed about three minutes, but seemed an hour to the Deans. While the light was overhead none of them could move or raise their heads to look at it. Pat described it as a sort of paralysis. When it left they got a glimpse of it but it was moving unbelievably fast.

Told by: Pam Mihey, age 17, Frankfort, In.
Collected by: Ray McMMain, Frankfort, 1968.
FA/legend file

17. Sam's aunt was driving alone down a back road in Arkansas on her way home. It was night. She saw something like a flying saucer in the sky, it was shaped like a disc and had lights around it. She stopped and got out to look at it. As soon as she stopped the saucer started moving towards her. She quickly got back in her car and started the engine. By this time the saucer was directly over the car, and the light it shed lit up the area around the car. The engine was started but the car would not move in any gear, even reverse. The saucer stayed over her car for about five to ten minutes then moved off so fast that it vanished almost immediately. As soon as the saucer was gone, the car ran and moved as it always had. (This story was told to Sam by his uncle, James Grove, around Christmas 1965 before his death in 1967. Sam's aunt, Mrs. James Grove, died when Sam was only six. The incident happened in 1940 near their farm outside Little Rock, Arkansas.)

Told by: Sam Grove, age 26, Frankfort, In.
Collected by: Ray McMains, 1968.
FA/legend file

18. One evening I was standing at the kitchen window washing dishes. I noticed something flash in the field next to our house. There is an apple tree in this field and the flash came from near the tree. I saw a ball of light about the size of the tree. This ball of light hovered around the field near the tree for about twenty minutes. I called my mother in the kitchen and she also saw this object. We watch the object for the time it remained in the field. It moved back and forth around the tree. Finally the ball of light moved away toward a factory down the block.

Told by: Sandra Compton, age 29, Tipton, In.
Collected by: Katie Myers, 1970.
FA/legend file

19. My aunt, who lives in Canada, heard a loud whispy noise. It sounded like a whirlwind. She was in her bedroom along which is a hedge of bushes. There was a loud engine noise. My aunt was sure nothing could fit into the space between the house and the hedge. She was so scared that she didn't want to look. After hearing the noise fade, she peeked outside and saw small lights disappearing over the tree tops. Next morning she went outside to look around near the bedroom window. She found that the bushes were burnt and the boards near her bedroom window were also burnt.

Told by: Sandra Compton, age 29, Tipton, In.

Collected by: Katie Myers, 1970.

FA/legend file

20. One afternoon my mother and I were returning from Frankfort, Indiana. Approximately five miles from Frankfort near a drive-in we noticed just above the screen three cigar-shaped objects. They seemed to be almost motionless. At first we thought they were kites. However, as we approached we saw several cars stopped also looking at the objects and we thought this rather unusual for so many people to stop to look at kites. As I drove up for a closer look we heard a very loud roaring noise like engines starting or a jet taking off. The windows of our car shook because of the noise and I thought they were going to break. After this initial noise the three cigar-shaped objects roared away with such speed they had disappeared in a few seconds. No ordinary plane or jet could have possibly disappeared that fast with that great speed, especially when they started off in mid-air from a stand still.

Told by: Katie Myers, age 22, Tipton, In.

Collected by: Katie Myers, 1970.

FA/legend file

21. My husband said that about three years ago he and some of his fraternity brothers drove to Florida for Spring Vacation. They drove straight through from Muncie to Fort Lauderdale with each boy taking a turn driving. One night on the way down at about three o'clock in the morning one of them saw a lighted saucer-shaped object flying a little above and directly behind the car. He was really afraid as there were no other cars on the road at that time of night and told the others. He said they were all simply petrified so they went faster and faster until they were going about one hundred and twenty miles per hour, but the thing stayed with them. He said this went on about ten minutes and the thing finally disappeared. He said all the boys saw it and will swear it's true.

Told by: Kathy Midkiff (from Steve Midkiff), Kokomo, In.

Collected by: Kathy Midkiff, 1970.

FA/legend file

NOTES

1. Linda Dégh, "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society: Form, Function, and Relationship to Other Genres," *American Folk Legend; A Symposium ed.*, Wayland Hand (UCLA and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 55.

2. The foregrounding of the unusual in order to explore cultural and social conventions is discussed by Roger Abrahams in "The Play of Worlds in Story and Storytelling." Unpublished ms. 1977. Part of his point here is the place that the frame plays in setting up the story.

3. Linda Dégh points out that: "Two connected traits of the legend seem to be of increasing relevance in modern society: (1) its fragmentary, incomplete form, and; (2) its tendency to be more communal than any other folklore genre. . . ." in "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society," p. 62.

4. See Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore.*" ed., Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1972), pp. 2-13.

5. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Dialectics of the Legend," *Folklore Preprint Series.* 6, 1973, p. 21.

6. Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Dialectics of the Legend," p. 49.

Content Analysis			
Elements	1*	2	3
location		Nevada	
time		1962	last August 6 PM
name			
observer's identity	pilot with little fuel	radar/Air Force	personal
observer's activity	flying airplane		was outside
other observers	Air Force radar		fetches parents
description of object			3 orange disks
site of "landing"			flying V-pat- tern in sky
lights		brilliant	
noise			
other effects	kidnapped plane	explosion	
motion			hovered/darted hovered
speed		too fast to be a jet	
length of appearance	3 hours		a few minutes
official involvement	Air Force	Air Force	
reaction of observer	returned	didn't know what it was	watched
*Numbers correspond to legend texts on preceding pages.			

Content Analysis			
4	5	6	7
a. — — b. Tipton		a. Rossburg, OH b. — —	
Summer 1965 3 Or 4 AM	1965 Sundown		last summer
a. mother b. personal	personal	sister-in-law of teacher	personal
a. sleeping b. driving	looking out back door	a. driving b. watching TV	cleaning house
a friend	daughter	a. 3 men b. — —	daughter/woman outside by car
large, milky iridescent	silver object	metallic, size of a car	five circular shaped kinda misty lights
field by house	near tree & power lines	a. field by house	above the road
red and green	blinking green red, blue, white	blinking red white, green	
wierd		similar to vacuum cleaner	
followed car		b. message on TV screen	
hovered, speed- ed up/vanished	hovered	a. hovering	zipping back and forth stopping/zipping
very rapid rate			
on and off for a week	40 minutes (10 days in row)	a. 2 hrs. 10 min.	15 minutes
Air Force			
	watched	a. watched	

Details of Content Analysis			
Elements	8*	9	10
location			Argus, IN
time		one night	
name			
observer's identity	personal	personal	man who came into bar
observer's activity	watching TV, having a drink	"parking"	
other observers	parents/friends	boyfriend	
description of object	large, red	huge orange ball	round
site of "landing"	in sky	above a field	in a field on his farm
lights			blinking red and white
noise		nothing unusual	
other effects	followed car/ grew dim when watched closely		took two full-grown cows
motion		hovering	
speed		went up quickly	
length of appearance			short time
official involvement			police
reaction of observer	watched	scared and wanted to leave	was too scared to go close
*Numbers correspond to legend texts on previous pages.			

Content Analysis			
11	12	13	14
S. Washington St.	on Boulevard, past school	California	on a country road
last year		April 1967 night	night
			Byron Miller
personal	a guy	personal	
driving	driving east	sitting on bed, smoking cigarette	“parking”
everyone else		in the house	Byron’s girl
big light object, round, w/windows			unbelievably bright light
over Dairy Queen	over power line	half mile above mountain	over car
here and there	on bottom	revolving	
			tremendous amts. of heat
hovering	hovered	hovered	hovering
took off real fast	shot upward at breakneck speed		
	a few minutes minutes	above five	about ten minutes
slowed down to get a better look	got out of car to see it better	went outside after waking people	sweated through shirt/stained seat

Elements	15*	16	17
location	backyard	Frankfort, IN (Sugar Creek)	Little Rock, Arkansas
time	summer 1966	one night	1940 night
name		Pat Dean	
observer's identity	personal		Sam Grove's aunt
observer's activity	having a steak fry	going fishing	driving down a back road
other observers	people at steak fry	Wanda, Mark, Jody and Joe Dean	
description of object	a ball of fire	something giving off light	a disc with lights
site of "landing"	up in sky	above creek	above car
lights			(present)
noise			
other effects		paralyzed observer	the car wouldn't move
motion	Moved across sky like comet/ meteorite		
speed	speeded up, slowed	unbelievably fast	so fast, it vanished almost immediately
length of appearance	20 or 30 minutes	about 3 minutes (seemed an hour)	5 to 10 minutes
official involvement	radio/newspaper		
reaction of observer	watched/ telephoned newspaper	couldn't move or look at it	stopped car, got out/got in later and tried to start car

*Numbers correspond to legend texts on previous pages.

18	19	20	21
	Canada	five miles from Frankfort	somewhere between Muncie & Ft. Lauderdale
one evening		one afternoon	3 years ago/ Spring Vacation
personal	aunt	personal	husband
at kitchen window washing dishes	in bedroom	driving	driving
mother		mother/other people in cars	fraternity borthers
a ball of fire size of a tree		three cigar shaped objects	saucer shaped
near apple tree in field	between hedge and house	over the screen of a drive-in	above and directly behind car
	(present)		(present)
	loud, whispy noise whirlwind/engine	loud roaring noise like engine	
	burnt bushes and boards on house	shook the car windows	
hovered	almost motionless		
		such speed it disappeared in seconds	120 mph
about 20 minutes			10 minutes
watched until it left	so scared she didn't want to look	stopped to watch	simply petrified tried to outrun it

Susan Domowitz

FOREIGN MATTER IN FOOD: A LEGEND TYPE

Jacob Grimm, contrasting the legend and the tale, emphasized the down-to-earth character of the legend when he said, "it walks, knocks at your door." Likewise, Linda Dégh¹ listed as an essential characteristic of the legend its attachment to real life and belief. Probably no facet of our daily lives is more down-to-earth or immediate than our concern with the food we eat. Because my curiosity was already sharpened by the legends which I am now collecting (also on the subject of foreign matter in food), I chose the small, "untapped" body of legends from the old MSU legend file (now housed in the IU Folklore Archives), in order to see first how these texts, more than twenty years old, form a recognizable legend type and then how they differ from current similar legends.

These twelve variants, collected from university students at MSU between 1948 and 1955, are similar only in their most basic elements. The core legend can be described as follows:

- a. Someone purchases packaged or canned food, or goes to a restaurant.
- b. Usually after having eaten the food (but sometimes before), something horrifying and disgusting is found to have been in the food.
- c. The foreign matter is some part of a human being (or, in two variants, a whole body), or an animal.
- d. Evidence for or against credibility of the incident.

The texts are primarily legend fragments: in only a few cases are complete stories told. Other documentation is minimal.

1. A human thumb was found in a can of tomatoes. (The speaker did not remember the brand of the tomatoes).
The speaker received the story from her aunt, who is supposed to have found the thumb. The speaker did not see the thumb, however. (This seems to be a variant of the little finger in the chop suey).

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Dorothy Goad
Lansing, Michigan 1954

This is the briefest of the legend fragments. No details are given as to whether any of the tomatoes were eaten before the thumb was discovered, or what action was taken after the grisly discovery. Claiming an older (presumably) relative as the source of this story adds to its credibility, though the comment at the end suggests that the narrator does not believe it to be true.

2. While dining at the China Inn in Lansing, a little finger from a human being was found in a serving of chop suey.
The speaker heard the story from a friend of his, who in turn had heard it from another friend.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Dorothy Goad
Lansing, Michigan 1955

Like the preceding legend, this one offers no details about the circumstances surrounding the presence of the finger in the chop suey. The story has changed its setting, however, from the relative safety and security of the home kitchen to a foreign restaurant. An interesting up-date to this legend was volunteered to me as I was sitting in the Indiana University Folklore Archives: as the conversation turned towards strange experiences with food, another student in the Archives said, "Yes, and my mother told me never to eat in Chinese restaurants because they always have piles of cat bones out in back." Chinese restaurants, however, are not the only culprits, as evidenced by the following legend.

3. Another of the typical city stories is the one concerning the 'finger in the chop suey.' In this instance, the finger is found in the spaghetti.

A group of women went into one of the restaurants in Flint that specialize in Italian food. While eating her spaghetti, one of the women bit into something that just didn't chew, so she spit it into a Kleenex, and put it into her pocket. The next day she sent her clothes to the cleaners without emptying the pockets, and in a short time she was visited by the police. After a brief investigation, the finger was traced to a place in Detroit that pre-cooked the spaghetti, and thence to the worker who had lost it.

Personally, I'm inclined to believe that this is just a 'take off' on the old story, possibly being employed by someone in a smear campaign, inasmuch as the local papers didn't carry the story and the police didn't seem to know anything about it.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Allen Bernard
Flint, Michigan 1951

This variant offers much more detail, including a careful explanation of what was done with the finger after discovery. As in the preceding variant, the offending restaurant is foreign, this time Italian. In this variant, the woman is described specifically as having at least chewed the finger before deciding that it wasn't edible. No explanation is offered, however, as to why she should want to save such a thing in her pocket. The narrator apparently does not believe the legend, though it appears he has tried to check its accuracy through the newspapers and the police. This suggests that if the legend had appeared in the newspaper, it would have been more readily believed. As Patrick Mullen states, "Just the fact that a story appears in print, even if it is declared fiction, adds plausibility to it."²

These three variants all share Motif G60: Human flesh eaten unwittingly. The consumption of human flesh is a most horrifying prospect; this act is probably considered more repulsive than the accidental ingestion of mice, or spider eggs, or other "foreign matter." Curiously enough, these variants do not include the reaction of the unwitting eater to his unwelcome discovery.

4. Recently a story has been circulating about Aunt Jane's Pickle Company here in Michigan. The story goes that the pickles are sliced up and put in a huge vat before being canned, and one day when the packers got to the bottom of the barrel, they found one of the Mexical (sic) field workers. . . all sliced up. Although the officials of the company tried to hush the story up, it did leak out.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Sharon E. Duncan
Durand, Michigan 1955

No longer is it just a finger or thumb that turns up in the food—now it is an entire (but not intact) human body. Aunt Jane's Pickles are a household word in Michigan; Aunt Jane's Pickle billboards line the Michigan highway. The invoking of such a specific local detail as the brand name of the pickles adds an element of horrible immediacy to the legend, for it is more than likely that the hearer in Michigan would have eaten some of this kind of pickles recently. In this way, the horrific implications of the legend content are brought home to the audience; the possibility of unwitting cannibalism is extended from the confines of the story to all consumers of Aunt Jane's pickles. The narrator did not question the fact that it would be difficult to identify anyone who had been sliced into pickle-sized pieces; the narrator's mention of the company's attempted cover-up suggests that she believes this legend. No evidence is cited in this variant to make the listener believe that it comes from a credible source.

5. A pickle factory in the northern part of Michigan employs Mexicans in the summer to harvest the crop. The cucumbers are put in huge vats to become pickled and are drawn off as they are needed to be sold on the market. Months after the Mexican had left the factory one of the vats became stopped up and no pickles would come out. The vat was opened and inside was found a Mexican who had had his throat cut and had been put in the vat so that his body would not be discovered.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Nancy Converse
Goodrich, Michigan 1953

This earlier variant of the same pickle factory legend differs in two important ways: the Mexican is not sliced up, but murdered and dumped unmutilated into the pickling vat; the listener is reassured by the fact that he cannot have eaten any of this person, though the thought of eating pickle brine which has marinated a dead body is sufficiently repulsive in itself. Again, no collaborating evidence is cited, and we are given no clue as to the reaction to the discovery. Although the specific pickle factory is not named, a Michigan listener would probably assume it to be Aunt Jane's Pickles, named in the previous variant.

6. Told by a friend of hers who had visited Aunt Jane's Pickle Company. The pickles are stored in large open vats, and are unprotected. When she saw the vats, a number of large rats were floating around on top with the pickles.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Arlene Parkhouse
Lansing, Michigan 1955

Although shorter than the other pickle variants, this later version includes what is supposed to be compelling evidence for the credibility of the story: the narrator's friend had actually visited Aunt Jane's Pickle Factory, and had herself seen the rats in the pickles. We are not told whether these pickles have already been marketed: the ambiguous message to the listener is, "You may well have eaten a rat the last time you ate Aunt Jane's Pickles." We do not know from the account as presented whether the narrator accepts this as true.

The three "pickle variants" agree as to the specific location of the events described, and this alone is enough of a connecting thread to make all of them seem plausible to a listener who hears more than one variant.

Variations on a legend core can present interesting complications, as in the following texts concerning human remains mistaken for food.

7. Back in Germany during the first world war, one of the sisters of the Palin family married a German man. After a while she left the country on the request of her husband for safety reasons. She promised to return to Germany and her husband right after the war. She stayed with the Palin family here in Detroit and after a while became ill and died.

Now there is a law in the United States Postal service saying that no letters may be sent with postal packages, which is still in effect. This sister made a will stating that she was to be cremated and the remains were to be sent back to the homeland and her family.

Meanwhile the Palin family in Detroit had been sending food and clothing packages to the family in Germany to help them through the war. So one package of just such goods were sent, along with a jar with the ashes of the cremated sister in its midst. A letter was sent at the same time stating what the contents of the one jar was. Evidently the letter had been lost for in the next letter from the homeland was received it read; the clothes and food were greatly appreciated especially the jar of flour, although it was a little brown it made a delicious cake.

FA/MSU 8.0 Robert Ackerman
 (told by Polly Palen, MSU)
 Grand Rapids, Michigan 1955

Here we have one of two variants of an old family story, in which the body is consumed, unlike the finger and the Mexican, in an unidentifiable state. Eating ashes does not convey quite the same horror as eating parts of a body; however, supporting evidence for the truth of the story makes up in plausibility whatever the story may lack in shock value. Places and family names are cited; even Post Office regulation (with which we are all familiar) contribute to the credibility of the events described. The sending of food and clothing packages to war victims provides a plausible framework for the horrible mistake—eating the ashes of one's own kin. It is not possible to determine from the text whether or not the informant believes this story to be true: since there is no disclaimer at the end, one might assume in the face of the evidence cited in the story that the story is accepted as true.

8. “My Grandmother told me this about five years ago in Detroit and says that it is really true.

“A relative of mine over in Europe married a German girl and then came over to America. Later her mother came over, this was before World War II so after the war started and she couldn't get back. After a short while she died and they decided to cremate her with the intention of sending the ashes back after the war. The couple sent a package of food and clothing with the can of the mother's ashes in the food package. They also sent a letter telling the relatives

what they had done. Nobody knew what happened to the letter but later they got a thank you note saying, "The flour tho' dark in color made a very good cake."

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Jean Anderson
 Rockford, Illinois
 (told by Polly Palen, MSU) 1955

These two variants provide the opportunity for a very interesting comparison, because the narrator was the same in both cases. (The collectors, however, have misspelled the name.) This story is quite different from the preceding one: the ashes belong, not to the wife of the man left in Germany, but to the mother of a couple residing in Detroit. World War I in the first variant became World War II in the second. No postal regulations are cited in the second variant, but, as in the first variant, the letter gets separated from the package. The grandmother, cited as the source of this legend, is quoted as saying it is really true. We do not know the attitude of the narrator, but absence of any statement of doubt suggests that the story is believed. The two variants are remarkable in their agreement on the contents of the thank-you letter: the fate of both bodies (wife in one, mother in the second) is to be made into a delicious cake.

9. There is a story that sometimes people find mice, cigarett butts, flies (sic), and other foreign matters in their soft drinks and particularly in coca-cola. I have heard these mentioned myself but I was unaware that they were folklore and had very little if any basis in fact. Duane Tester told me just recently that he had heard of a man who was drinking a coke and felt something against his mouth. It turned out to be a mouse according to this particular story. I have heard the same concerning cigarett butts, and flies. I check with the bottling plant for Coca-Cola in Pontiac, Mich. and went through the plant there. In no way is it possible for foreign matter to get into a bottle of coca-cola. The syrup is fed into a tube from sealed containers, and and these are all mixed within this tube from where they are compressed into the bottles and the cap secured at the same time. No bit of the components is exposed in the entire practice and the bottling plant is very clean and open for inspection at all times. The men working there said that they had heard this story but had never had the bottle with the thing in it come back so they could see it. I can find no one who has had this happen to them but practically everyone I have mentioned it to has heard of the mouse story or some such allied story.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 G. M. Jordan, Jr.
 Royal Oak, Michigan 1951

This legend fragment is followed by a rather lengthy, detailed "disconfirmation" of such legends. One of the characteristics of legends is

that they can never be quite pinned down: they always involve the next person in the chain of the telling, just out of reach of the inquirer. This variant, even in its disconfirmation, cites the fact that even the men working in the plant had heard the story, but had never seen the evidence. The explanation of the bottling process is convincing mainly because it is so detailed, and not because it makes clear the impossibility of mice getting into the bottles. Credibility for the "anti-legend" is enhanced by the informant's visit to the source, and his report of his findings.

10. This is a true story but I am including it because of what was said in the class about foreign objects dissolving in coca cola. It was mid-night and me and a buddy of mine had just gotten off of watch. Went down to the mess hall where we had a coke machine and got 2 cokes. This buddy of mine had his about half gone when he noticed something in the bottle. We looked and seen this small mouse. We ran up to sick bay to get the doctor and he gave him some white stuff to drink to make him heave. He did, and was sick for the next three days.

FA/MSU MB 8.0 Dan Owens
Ionia, Michigan 1948

Here is the only variant which is a first person narrative, and the only one to describe a reaction to the discovery of the foreign object in the food (or drink). We do not know from this text whether the informant is aware that his account of what happened to him is also a legend which, as the preceding variant claims, is known by almost everyone. Although this text is the earliest in this group of legend variants, it would be wrong to assume that it is the original story from which the legend sprang. As Patrick Mullen explains, ". . . the specific rumors mentioned by the informants are not necessarily the origin points. What is more likely is that rumors act as reinforcements for already existing legends."³ A great deal of detail is supplied in this narrative: the name of the witness, the exact time, and exactly when it was, in the process of drinking, that the mouse was noticed. The story is recounted in a very straightforward manner and no overt attempt is made to convince the listener of the truth of the story. The fact that it happened to the narrator is taken as proof enough.

Other stories of consumption or possible consumption of prepared drinks incorporate both motifs of human and animal bodies.

11. When goods come in on box cars the men who unload usually try to take a few samples home. One day a group of barrels came in on the train labeled alcohol. Well, needless to say, the men had a field day. They tapped all the kegs and drank until they could hold no more. Then they decided they had better get back to work and finish unloading the barrels. Being in a rather clumsy state, one of

the men knocked over a barrel and split it open. The men looked at what they saw with a horrified expression—there preserved in the alcohol they had been drinking was a body.

MSU MB 8.0 Genevieve Irons
Libertyville, Illinois 1955

This is a somewhat confusing legend fragment: it includes no localized details, and does not attempt to give a plausible explanation as to why a body should be in the keg of alcohol. Nevertheless, it fits the pattern of the other variants: the unsuspecting men drink what they suppose to be alcohol, and discover to their horror, *after* they have consumed the alcohol, that it was actually being used to preserve a dead body. Little reaction to the discovery is recorded, and, again, we do not know what the attitude of the narrator is toward this legend.

12. The owner of a cider mill near Okemos, Michigan, found two dead cats in the bottom of a barrel (sic) of cider which he had been selling. He did not know they were there until the cider got low enough in the barrel for him to see them. (sic) Apparently the cats never effected (sic) the cider because the owner never (got) any complaints on any of the cider.

The speaker learned this story from her uncle, who had a friend working at the mill.

MSU MB 8.0 Dorothy Goad
Lansing, Michigan 1955

There is one well-known cider mill near Okemos, and to any listener from that area (as I am), this brief description of the locale of the story brings to mind a specific place. As in the pickle variants, it is not a particular character in the legend who discovers the body: the implication is that all of us (the audience) who have recently consumed cider may well have drunk the very cider in which the cats drowned. The narrator mentions that the owner never got any complaints, i.e., we would not have been able to detect a strange taste that might have alerted us to stop drinking the cider. Credibility is lent to the story by the speaker's uncle, whose friend worked at the mill, and supposedly witnessed the incident. No explanation is offered as to how, or why, the cats got into the cider barrel. Neither is there any attempt to actively convince the listener that this is a true story: it is told in a factual, direct manner.

All twelve variants combine elements of the core legend, although the twelve variants are extremely different from each other in certain details. A schematic comparison of the elements present in the variants can be represented as follows:

Variant and year	Canned or packaged food	Restaurant Food	Human part (or body)	Animal	Discovered after eating	Credible Source cited	Legend believed
1-54	canned tomatoes		human thumb		aunt	no?	
2-55		Chinese	human finger		friend	friend's	yes
3-51		Italian	human finger		yes	police	no
4-55	Aunt Jane's Pickles		body		yes?		?
5-53	pickles (unspecified)		body		yes?		?
6-55	Aunt Jane's Pickles			rats	?	friend who had visited the factory	yes
7-55	flour		human ashes		yes		yes?
8-55	flour		human ashes		yes	grand-mother	yes
9-51	Coca Cola			mouse	yes	factory	no
10-48	Coca Cola			mouse	yes	first-person narrative	yes
11-55	alcohol		body		yes		?
12-55	cider			cats	yes	uncle's friend	yes

Some interesting observations may be made from this schema. More human than animal matter is present in the accounts, and three-fourths of the discoveries were made *after* the food or drink was already consumed. Only one reaction to the discovery was cited, and this was in the only first person account. There were two disconfirmations, in which care was taken to refer to the proper authorities (the police and the factory). Legends that specified actual people known to the narrator were believed to be true, in contrast to those variants which cited no source and were not believed to be true. There were only two instances of the offending matter being found in restaurant food—is it coincidental that both of these were reported to be foreign restaurants? In all the other variants, on the other hand (with the exception of the kegs of alcohol) the horrible substance is discovered in the most ordinary food—things like canned tomatoes, pickles and Coca Cola which can almost be considered staples in the American diet.

There seems to be a sort of two-pronged subliminal message operating in these legends. First, beware the exotic, i.e., foreign food. This is supported by the variant I overheard in the archives (see above). You never *really* know what these foreigners put in their mysterious dishes, the legend

seems to warn. On the other hand, there is the sense that even the most familiar things may turn out to be sources of danger, and one can never be too careful. The motif of unwitting cannibalism serves to remind the listener that he can never be absolutely *sure* about anything, even the most banal security. Mullen cites ambiguity as the one quality which rumors share⁴ and it would seem from the brief examination of these variants that ambiguity is one of the core elements of legend type.

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NOTES

1. Linda Dégh, "Folk Narrative," in *Folklore and Folklore*, ed. Richard M Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 72.
2. Patrick B. Mullen, "Modern Legend and Rumor Theory," *Journal of The Folklore Institute* IX (1971): 101.
3. Mullen, p. 97.
4. Mullen, p. 104.